




Be Aware - New Zealand drivers are not as used to cyclists as their European counterparts - cycle with care
Wearing high viz clothing increases your visibility
Share the road - be a courteous road user
Make sure you are familiar with New Zealand road rules - read the road code

 Start Here
 Finish Here

 State Highway
 Information
 i-SITE
 Visitor Centre

 Toilet

 Preferred Route
 Alternative Route
 Previous or Following Tour



By Peter Seed

Great Southern Cycle Route WAIKOUAITI TO DUNEDIN TOUR

This map and the accompanying narrative describe one of eleven proposed all-day cycle tours (Tour 1 through 11). Together, they take you from Christchurch to Dunedin on a route I call The Great Southern Cycle Route. Included in each tour are, when found, accommodations (including camping grounds) along the way that allow you to pick and choose in planning a day's ride. To that end you can either subdivide a tour into two days or combine into one day all or a portion of two or more succeeding tours.

Some tours are significantly shorter than others because they are hillier and more demanding or because they are more conducive to tempting diversions on the way and/or further exploration at days end. For overseas cyclists, “Backpackers” is a lodging (sometimes with only bunk rooms) that features a communal kitchen, a “Domain” is a community park that normally provides toilets and often allows camping, and a “Holiday Park” provides sites for camper vans and tent camping and often motel units.

Most of The Great Southern Cycle Route is on quiet backcountry roads almost all of which (with 1km exception) are sealed (paved in USA lingo). The trip first traverses the fertile farmland of the level Canterbury Plains, then winds through rolling pastoral countryside with stop offs in picturesque cities and towns. Three memorable gorges and some classic coastal scenery add spice to the route. At all times the rugged Southern Alps that morph into other mountain ranges (foothills in Kiwi speak) as you proceed south, serve as a stunning backdrop.

Admittedly the route meanders a bit (at times even doubles back). But who cares so long as the scenery is soothing, the route is (mostly) untrammled and the road is sealed! Savour the solitude and enjoy! Cycle in authentic New Zealand – off the beaten path.

If you are bicycling with friends, consider leapfrogging with your vehicles so that at the end of the day you will have advanced those vehicles to where you are spending the night. I did that, and it worked quite well (though admittedly it helped that my wife was more than happy to drive most of the route, join us for lunch and bicycle to meet us as the muse moved her).

State Highways are designated SH followed by a number. The heavily trafficked SH1 is used sparingly and only when unavoidable. The Area Code for all the telephone numbers herein given (e.g., 302 8955) is 03 if



the call is made within New Zealand. If calling from overseas, the Country Code is 64 and the Area Code is 3.

The total distance of the route is about 579km (always taking the Preferred Route when given a choice). This distance assumes that you have decided to take the Waimate to Kurow Tour and then the Kurow to Oamaru Tour instead of the alternative Waimate to Oamaru Tour. If you choose the latter, the distance is about 518km. All distances are good faith estimates based on odometer readings but are not guaranteed.

All accommodations, eateries and cycle shops (if any) mentioned herein were confirmed as of April 2010. No assurances can be given that they will remain open. Nor can the author warrant the safety of the route. The recommended roads have no special provisions for cyclists. You must therefore assume the responsibilities and risks for your own safety when cycling the route. There, the mostly retired lawyer-author has spoken. Now go and have a good time.

Waikouaiti to Dunedin Tour

Waikouaiti provides convenient accommodations at the Golden Fleece Hotel Motel (465 7395: restaurant included) that is located on your left where the day's tour ends. Another 0.6km further south on SH1 is the turnoff east onto Beach St. Waikouaiti Beach Tavern and Motels (465 7340/Cliffintavern@xtra.co.nz) is located 1.4km down this road (just 0.5km from the Waikouaiti Beach). Just beyond the motel is Waikouaiti Camping Gound (465 7432/7432/holidaywaikouaiti@xtra.co.nz).

The beach stretches all the way to the Karitane estuary and is worth a visit. You may even see horses being exercised on the beach. The giant headland situated just north of the beach was part of Matanaka, the homestead of the legendary Johnny Jones. He was a sealer, whaler and entrepreneur (in that order) who enticed early settlers to farm his property in time for it to become a critical breadbasket for a fledgling Dunedin settlement. Jones even coined his own currency. Remnants of his homestead (including a restored schoolhouse) can be found by taking a gravel road at the north end of the beach for a climb of about 100m.

Include in your exploration the Hawksbury Lagoon accessed from the beach by a path leading west from the north end of the beach or from the north end of Scofia St that exits south onto Beach St 0.7km east of SH1. The lagoon is a haven for a variety of water fowl – ducks, geese, black swans, gray herons and the like, plus many other water prone birds such as stilts and oystercatchers.

Summary Description

This tour is a fitting finale to the Great Southern Cycle Route. After a short scenic stretch on SH1 (with a sealed shoulder), the route takes you into the wee community of Karitane where a short exploratory stopover as noted below is a must. Then after a steep 1.6km ascent and a lookout on top for an iconic view back at the beaches of Karitane and Waikouaiti, an on-high coastal run greets you on an undulating road that crosses the same railway line six times.

Next comes a 3km ride on SH1, as it skirts Blueskin Bay, soon followed by the longest (about 8km) climb of the Great Southern Cycle Route. On the way up be grateful for the tree cover that shades much of your route and protects you from any wind (and/or rain). At the same time enjoy intermittent views through openings to the west of sloping pastureland up close, bush clad foothills and the Silver Peaks in the distance. On top, for about the next 3km, feast your eyes upon breathtaking views of Otago Harbour below and the Otago Peninsula beyond - that only get better as you peddle this stretch of ridgeline.

The descent is long and steep, but restrain yourself. As you descend take in the views of residential Dunedin laying partial claim to the hillsides ahead, but behold too the unsettled hills and valleys that dominate the rest of the landscape. Finally at bottom enter downtown Dunedin, a city that surely will delight you.

Total Distance: 42.1km

Kilometres Description

K 00.0 From the centre of town with The Golden Fleece on your left, head south on **SH1**. Glorious views of rolling countryside and close in foothills soon appear.
K 01.6 Cross the Waikouaiti River. On the opposite side is a picnic area on your left nestled next to the river.
K 03.0 Turn left (Southeast) onto **Coast Rd** for Karitane. This small seaside settlement situated at the mouth of the Waikouaiti River is where the world-renowned Truby King donated his holiday house in 1907 to serve as the first nursery for the care of “Karitane babies”. From these small beginnings arose the Plunket Society founded by King. The society set in motion a nation-wide movement to assure healthy care for babies. Soon a phalanx of “Karitane nurses” provided hands on advice and succour to mothers caring for their infants. The movement spread to other countries, and when King died (by then he had been knighted Sir Truby King), the first state funeral held in New Zealand for a private citizen was conducted in his honour. King's white washed holiday house, expanded since his death and now a private home, remains perched on a small hill above the wharf at the mouth of the river - clearly visible to cyclists entering the village.

Note: If you are a hard charger, don't mind the traffic and for some strange reason are impervious to quaint seaside villages and glorious coastal scenery, you can press on with SH1 for a more rounded and monstrous hill to peddle up (and down) and thereby reduce the distance by 2km.

K 06.0 Note sign to a general store reached a block away by turning right onto Scarp St. As the road bends southwest, a turn off to your left takes you to public toilets ♀ a block away.
K 06.2 Soon after the road bends southwest is a sign to the beach reached two blocks away by turning left (southeast) onto Seaforth St. Highly recommended is (1) a stop off at Karitane's long sandy beach framed by rocky promontories and (2) a walk to the scenic Huriawa Reserve, site of a Maori Pa: (fortress in USA lingo)) at the end of the peninsula northwest of the beach. Though attacked by other Maori tribes, the Pa proved to be impregnable.
K 07.5 A steep but rewarding ascent begins. Part way up the hill check out the impressive Marae on your right further up the hill. On your left is Titimoana Whare Roa (meaning “long house overlooking the ocean”), a spacious villa with stunning views of the ocean and private access to Karitane Beach. This is the perfect lodging for a group of cyclists because the house has 6 bedrooms and 2 bathrooms and arrangements can be made with the owner to secure provisions for dinner and breakfast. (442 6624/ www.tirimoana.com)
K 08.9 The top is reached. Stop at the lookout on your left for a classic vista to the north of the rolling surf washing the Karitane and Waikouaiti Beaches. Intermittent views of on-high coastal scenery greet you for the next 8km.
K 11.8 As you enter the small village of Seacliff, you can reach the Truby King Reserve by turning right (Northwest) onto Russell Rd and peddling uphill 0.2km. This reserve was once the site for New Zealand's largest building when completed as a mental hospital in 1884. Truby King was superintendent of the hospital from 1889 until 1921. He added to his fame by introducing then revolutionary methods for treating the mentally ill that seem common sense now. They included work in the outdoors, good nutrition, patient privileges and more freedom to roam. Unfortunately the hospital was built on unstable soils that ultimately lead to its demolition. Overlooking the reserve is a Backpackers, aptly called The Asylum (465 8123).
K 16.3 St Barnabas Church which dates from 1872, can be reached through a gate on your left from the carpark just before the railway crossing and is well worth a visit for its stained glass windows.
K 16.8 As an optional sidetrip of 3 km, for a visit to Warrington Beach and Blueskin Bay Inlet, turn left off Coast Rd at Perry St which is signposted to Warrington. Turn right at Couper St and then pedal straight ahead into Bank Rd over the railway crossing. At Park Rd turn left at a T intersection marked by a giveway sign and then 0.3 km further turn right into Hill Rd. Proceed down to Bay Rd and turn left. Turn right where Bay Rd goes onto the Esplanade and ride down to the Domain. Public toilets ♀ can be found here and there is a track to the beach beside the Surf Clubrooms. The gravel road which leads around behind the children's playground passes an area where camping is permitted and goes through the trees to Blueskin Bay Inlet - a pleasant stopping place. To retrace your journey and return to the junction of Park Rd with Coast Rd go back up the hill to Bay Rd and turn left. Proceed to the end of the road and turn right into Bank Rd. Access to the Inlet can also be found here. Ride up to the intersection with Park Rd and turn left here. It shortly rejoins Coast Rd and leads out to SH1.
K 18.6 After a winding descent, turn left (South) onto **SH1** at the T-intersection. In a little over 1km the road hugs Blueskin Bay on your left for 2km.

K 21.7 A convenience store is on your right. Just as SH1 begins to bend away from the bay, turn left (Southeast) (as directed by a bicycle symbol) onto **Harvey St** that takes you through the small settlement of Waitati.
CYCLISTS ARE PROHIBITED FROM STAYING ON SH1, so gird yourself for an interminable climb (about 8km) on a long winding road that, until the motorway was built, was the only way to Dunedin. The downside of this route is the climb (about 1,000 feet). The upside is that the road is sealed and nearly traffic free, the ascent is (mostly) gradual and the views on top are (barring rain) spectacular.
K 21.8 On your right is the entrance to the Café at Blueskin Nurseries where you can break for lunch either indoors or outside in the garden.
K 22.6 Turn right onto **Mt. Cargill Rd**. The climb begins in earnest.
K 26.0 At a Y intersection bear right on Mt. Cargill Rd signposted to Dunedin (instead of following the road signposted for Port Chalmers).
K 30.6 After a few false summits, you reach the top (sort of) and a nice stop on your left for a good view of the elongated Otago Harbour way below with Port Chalmers nestled along the shoreline in the foreground and Otago Peninsula looming across the harbour. (The lookout is marked by a sign that reads “WALKWAY CARPARK – 300m,” where a track leads to Mt Cargill's summit above and Port Chalmers below.) More stunning views of the harbour and peninsula follow as you traverse the ridge for the next 2km.
K 33.2 Upper Junction Rd enters on your left. At this point the road is signposted “**North Rd.**”
K 34.5 On the way down is a bench on your left. Take a break and pan with the eye, from left to right, a fragment of Dunedin on the hillside and the natural setting that otherwise holds sway.
K 37.2 Where Norwood St comes in from the right, enter the densely settled part of Dunedin. A marked cycle lane leads the way.
K 39.3 Cross the signalized intersection with Opoho Rd (on your left) and Bank Rd (on your right). Stop and take a break at the luxuriant Dunedin Botanic Garden on your left. Treat yourself to a croc at the Crocodile Café in the gardens. Then carry on straight ahead sticking to the marked cycle lane on **North Cumberland St (SH1)**, first turning left to enter this one way street south into downtown Dunedin.
K 39.7 Duke St enters on your right.
Note: For camping turn right onto Duke St and head for Leith Valley Touring Park (479 9936/www.leithvalleyturingpark.co.nz) located on Malvern St about 1km away.
K 40.5 On your left is the heart of the University of Otago campus. Consider another stop just to roam the grounds before moving on.
K 41.7 The stunning gingerbread Dunedin Railroad Station is on your left. Turn right (Northeast) onto **Stuart St**. Within a block you will find Cycle Surgery on your left and R&R Sport on your right. (See below.)
K 42.1 You have reached the Octagon, the City's eight-sided pulsating centre, and the end of not only the day's tour but also the Great Southern Cycle Route.

Accommodation in Dunedin is endless, so no attempt will be made here to mention any of them other than to note that there are plenty of hotels and Backpackers within easy walking distance of the Octagon with motels and B&Bs further away and camping grounds even further. (You passed some of those motels on your way into the City Centre.)

Browns Avanti (477 7259) does cycle repairs. Cycle Surgery (477 7473/www.cyclesurgery.co.nz), R&R Sports (474 1211/www.rsports.co.nz) and Bike Otago (477 7396/www.bikeotago.co.nz) offer not only repair service but also bikes for hire. If you wish to extend your trip by cycling the acclaimed Otago Rail Trail and you are not cycling on a mountain bike, you would be well advised to hire one.

Located in the Octagon is the full service 📶 Dunedin i-Site Visitor Centre (474 3300/dunedin@i-SITE.org). For more about all the wonderful attractions and varied accommodations in Dunedin check out the Visitor Centre or www.dunedinnz.com and www.cityofdunedin.com.

About the Author and His Wife

Peter Seed and his wife, Linda, divide their time between White Bear Lake, Minnesota, Vero Beach, Florida, and Dunedin, New Zealand. Peter co-authored a cycle touring book for Minnesota/Wisconsin (Biking With The Wind) and a walking book about the South West Coast Path in England (A Coastal Affair). Linda tries to keep Peter reined in. Both love the outdoors and cycling. Peter can be reached at slinda5938@aol.com.

How To Get More Maps

You may download this or any of the other maps of the Great Southern Cycle Route free at www.southisland.org.nz/maps.asp or www.seftonhomestay.com by clicking Cycle Tourism. The maps are also available at most visitor centres and cycle shops along the route.

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